

with the Authors Compliments

THE RELIGION OF TRUTH.

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ADDITION
TO
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In answer to criticisms received.

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Page 4, after last paragraph, read :—

Many have said to me since reading my booklet that there *must* have been a beginning—they cannot grasp a “no beginning”—If “must,” then *who* created the Universe? They answer “A Supreme Being.” The obvious reply is :—“Then who created the Supreme Being?”

Surely it is just as easy to understand a “no beginning,” as to think that the Universe was created by a Supreme Being for whose origin they cannot account.

Page 9, after “state of sinlessness,”) read :—

Do I believe such an individual as Jesus Christ ever lived?

The evidence on this point is most conflicting. Taking into consideration all the statements I can find bearing on the subject I am inclined to doubt that such a personage did exist.

When the historic Church set about a statement of its history it could not even fix satisfactorily the year of its supposed founder's birth; and the “Christian era” was made to begin some years—two, three, four, five or eight—after that on which the Chronologists were later obliged to fix. Ultimately, his birth was placed at the

winter solstice, the birthday of the Sun-God in the most popular cults, and while that is fixed as an anniversary, the date of his crucifixion is made to vary from year to year in order to conform to the astronomical principle on which the Jews had fixed their Passover.

There is not a single trace, mythical or non-mythical, of the life of the alleged teacher from the age of twelve to thirty.

There is not one teaching in the gospels that is not paralleled in the contemporary and previous ethical literature of the Jews, Greeks, Romans, and Hindus ; and the passages which have been claimed as most characteristic—for instance, the Sermon on the Mount—are mere compilations of earlier Jewish utterances.

We are led to the conclusion that no strain of teaching in the gospels can be fathered on the shadowy founder.

It is clear that the central narrative of the gospel biography, the story of the Last Supper, the Agony, Betrayal, Trial and Crucifixion, is neither a contemporary report nor a historical tradition, but the simple transcript of a Mystery-Drama. The proof lies in the very structure of the document.

The association of the Christian religion with "Fishes" is accounted for by the fact that at the time of the supposed birth of Christ, December 25th, in the year one of the Christian era, the Sun was in the constellation of Pisces—hence arose the myth about the disciples and followers of Christ, in the early days, being largely fishermen and those who followed the fishing industry—again the miraculous draft of fishes—also the 5,000 being fed with five loaves and two small fishes, and 4,000 being fed with seven loaves and a few little fishes. The early Christians used a fish (made in different materials) as a secret sign by which they knew each other, and no

doubt admission to their meetings, which had to be held in secret because of their persecution, was only obtained on showing the emblem. At the present day boys are presented with a small silver fish when they obtain a scholarship at St. Paul's School, and many of them wear it on their watch chains whilst at the School.

The fact that the fish was an emblem of Christianity because the Sun was in Pisces at the time of the supposed birth of Christ, shows how the Christian Religion is partly based on the Sun worship of the ancients, and in further proof thereof the altars are placed at the east end of our churches and the priest faces the altar, *i.e.*, faces the rising Sun. Granting, *for the sake of argument*, that such a personage did exist, we must, I think come to the conclusions that :—

1. He was the son, some authorities assert not the eldest son, of Joseph and Mary.

2. He was born in the ordinary course of nature, and not by any supernatural birth, at Nazareth, a small town of Galilee, and not at Bethlehem.

3. The precise date of his birth is unknown. It took place probably under the reign of Augustus, about the Roman year 750, probably some years before the year 1 of the Christian era.

He was not born on December 25th, but probably in March or April.

4. He was a thinker, a mystic, a teacher, a reformer, an idealist, following no trade except for a short time that of his father, a carpenter, possessing very beautiful thoughts, although not always practical as regards life, and had he lived during the Great War would, in all probability, have been a conscientious objector.

5. According to some authorities he travelled much, as we know nothing of his life from twelve to thirty years of age.

6. He did not rise from the dead nor ascend to heaven with his body.

Moreover we would ask those who hold the view that Christ lived :—

Where was he from twelve to thirty years of age ?

Why is there no record of his life during this period ?

Why is there no statement of his having said where he had been and what experiences he had gone through ?

Not a word for eighteen years.

Surely this is a strong argument in support of the view that no such personage ever lived.

Page 12, after “change existing forms,” near bottom of page, read :—

Do I believe in a soul ?

There are two definitions of what people mean by the word :—

1. A spirit which leaves us at death, passes into some future state, represents us more or less as we were on earth and is eternal. I do not believe in such a soul.

2. A condition of mind, of intellect, of intelligence, which places us far above all the lower animals and makes a wide gulf between them and us. I do believe that we possess such an attribute as above defined.

If, however, you insist that man has a Soul in agreement with the first definition, one must ask at what stage of his evolution did he obtain it ?

Had *Homo Sinanthropus* (Chinese type) a Soul ? or *Homo Pithecanthropus* (Java type)

or *Homo Eoanthropus* (Pitldown type), or *Homo Heidelbergensis* or *Homo Rhodesiensis*, or *Homo Neanderthalensis* or was it only when he arrived at *Homo Sapiens* that he possessed this attribute, and if so why not before ?

On the other hand if man has a Soul, then why not his ancestors ? Why not admit that all the Animal Kingdom has a Soul ?

If to this you say " They have," then why not grant the possession of a Soul to all the Vegetable Kingdom ?

If to this you say that all the Vegetable Kingdom also has a Soul, surely you must admit that all the Inorganic World has a Soul, as that part of the Universe has many of the characteristics of the Animal and Vegetable Kingdoms but cannot reproduce its like.

This latter possession however is only a characteristic which does not eliminate the possession of a Soul.

If you also grant a Soul to the Inorganic World I admit you are logical—my reply is simply, I don't agree with you.

If on the other hand you decline to follow your argument to its logical conclusion, one must then say you are illogical and disagree with you on that count.

There are those who think that there must exist something which they call " spirit " as distinguished from matter. It is only logical to reason from this premise that the indestructibility of spirit is as essential as the accepted indestructibility of matter ; but surely it is illogical to propound the theory that the spirit, having left the body, continues as a personality when the material body does not.

The ultimate indestructibility of both matter and spirit being accepted, then reason demands that the personality of the spirit entity can be no more preserved on dissolution than the per-

sonality of the material entity. The only difference between them is that before the latter can be merged in the common stock it must be broken down into its various constituents, most of them as immaterial as the spirit itself.

An interesting reflection on these views are the directions given in the Will of a well-known Master of Fox Hounds who died at the end of 1929.

“At death my body shall be placed in the cheapest decent receptacle and taken in my own trailer and car to the most convenient crematorium and cremated—my gardener William Gittos and my chauffeur will accompany my body and no one else, taking a small box (deal of about 12 inches each way) to bring back the ashes, which are to be broken up and scattered in my wood at Breinton Court, as were my daughter Alice’s ashes in 1901.

I believe (and some of the leading scientific men of the day assure me that I believe rightly) that at my death the organic constituents of my body will be quickly converted into carbonic acid and ammonia, and that these gases will by the law of diffusion be at once distributed over the whole world, and will help to build other plants, and in their turn animals, so that in the future every plant and animal in the world will contain an infinitesimal portion of my body.

The inorganic parts of my body, the phosphates of lime, etc., will also be dissolved, and by the agency of rains, rivers, and ocean currents, will also be distributed, but more slowly. The energy left in my body at death will quickly leave it and form part of the energy of the universe. This I believe to be true Resurrection of the Dead and the Life Everlasting.

I believe in God, but, like the GOD of St. Paul’s Greeks, it is an unknown GOD, as in our present state of development we are incapable

of understanding Him, His Origin, and some of His laws.”

Page 18, after end of page, read :—

Another criticism that has frequently been brought forward is the question asked me “ Do I believe in a God ? ” My answer is that I believe in : A Supreme Power showing Supreme Wisdom, Supreme Justice, Supreme Benevolence and Unalterable Purpose, virtues which will be found in the Laws of Nature. If my friends, you prefer to use the word “ God,” then :—

The Laws of Nature are my God.

GEORGE STEELE-PERKINS.

THE RELIGION OF TRUTH

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BY GEORGE STEELE-PERKINS.

Dr. Davidson (then Archbishop of Canterbury) said in the Convocation of May, 1914 : “ He would say to every honest student ‘ Follow the Truth ; do your utmost to find it ; let it be your guide wherever it may lead you.’ Such study must not be hindered by a single thought of the consequences of what the conclusions might be to others.”

Dean Inge, preaching at St. Paul’s Cathedral on Ascension Day, 1914, said : “ Those who are most in earnest about improving the condition of human society in this world look upon the Christian heaven as a fairy story, and many of them think that the clergy are trying to keep them quiet by giving them promissory notes to be paid in another world which does not exist. They even look upon the doctrine of a future life as a profitable fraud, which, after many centuries, has at last been exposed, and so they say : ‘ We prefer payment in cash ; your bank up in the sky has stopped payment.’ Eternal life is not something in the future ; it is now.”

Dr. Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham, has preached similar truths.

The Times, in its “ Literary Supplement,” reviewing Frazer’s completed “ Golden Bough,” says : “ The Golden Bough has demonstrated ‘ that the great religions of the world were born

in hot-beds of savage sorcery, and that mummeries of the primitive medicine-man still sway mankind.' "

It is unnecessary to quote further authors in proof that we should seek Truth and ensue it.

I had the pleasure a few years ago of reading a paper to a debating society on " The Origin of Life " in which I endeavoured to prove that life (the organic world) had evolved from the inorganic world.

Since that, I read a paper before the same debating society on " The Evolution of the Inorganic World " in which I endeavoured to prove that the whole Universe had evolved from one primordial gas, and given that one primordial gas we could account for everything in the Universe up to Life and Man himself. Further I showed that the Universe was not only a running down machine, which would one day end in nothingness and death, but that it was a " running up " machine as well, and that as there were stars and planets getting cooler and cooler, complex and more complex as cooling went on, there were also stars getting hotter and hotter, simpler and simpler as their heat increased, until they would end in being nothing more than one primordial gas, and so the cycle would be complete. This is proved by Spectrum Analysis.

It is remarkable how most minds can easily understand that there can be " no ending," and yet fail to grasp that there could have been " no beginning "—yet they will talk of Eternity ; but eternity means "*without beginning or end*"—they can see the one end of the definition, but fail to grasp the other—fail to perceive the " circle " of events, the no-beginning, and the no-ending, fail to observe that if there were either there could be no circle.

Religion, like everything else in the Universe, has evolved. Evolution is the one great factor

running through the whole gamut of historical and pre-historic time.

In Evolution is Truth, and Truth is what we have to follow, wheresoever it may lead us.

The universal religion at one time in the world's history was phallic—naturally so, as all savage races could see that fertility and reproduction were essential, and therefore worshipped the generative organs as the givers of life, as do millions of the Empire's subjects at the present day, as seen in the Lignam-Yoni altars all over India, worshipped by millions of Hindus, especially at Benares and in Southern India—not so many in Northern India—as every one knows who has lived in India and has taken the trouble to go into Hindu temples ; specimens of them can be seen in the British Museum.

The origin of Brahminism is lost in antiquity—it is a very much older religion than that which sprung from it, viz., Buddhism, which was founded by Gautama (a Sakza prince of Kapilavastu), about the 6th century before the date attributed to Christ. Gautama devoted himself to an ascetic life and contemplation, and to a study of the causes of things, regarding ignorance as the greatest evil. Hinduism is applied to both Brahminism and Buddhism.

An ancient law giver, famous sage and philosopher of China, Confucius, lived 550 or 551–478 B.C. He taught nothing respecting a God or religious worship. He inculcated the Golden Rule that “ we should do as we would be done by,” and was perhaps the greatest teacher the world has ever known.

Mohammed, the great prophet of Arabia, lived from A.D. 570 to 632, and therefore Moham-
medanism is of more recent date than that of Christianity. His wise laws and regulations are recorded in the Koran, and contain numerous incentives to the constant practice of charity,

mercy, and kindness. Moreover, he absolutely proscribed the use of all intoxicating liquors, and also of betting and gambling.

All religions show traces of an original phallic cult, and Christianity in its symbols of Church rituals and vestments is essentially phallic, although the origin has been lost as far as the uneducated masses are concerned but is well known to priests and every well-read individual.

The cross is only symbolic of certain things in an ancient religion, and what it represents is well known to all priests and scholars of Religious history.

As regards the dogma about a child born of a pure virgin, that statement has occurred *over and over again* in history. The dogma was most probably derived from the Egyptian Isis and Horus—Isis bears Horus virginally. Certainly a religion existed in the island of Crete 10,000 years before the Christian era in which the people worshipped a Holy Mother and Child, the child having been born of the Holy Mother, a virgin, as can be seen in mural paintings in Crete at the present day.

Virgin births occur in many mythologies, savage and other.

In old Assyria or Chaldoea there was a popular worship of a child-bearing goddess, and in the Assyrian basement of the British Museum may be seen old Chaldoean figures of this kind, as also in another case of "Antiquities from Dali," upstairs, are a number of similar figures. They represent a Chaldoean cultus earlier than the Egyptian worship of Isis. The same idea, *i.e.* Virgin-births, was common in the New World before the arrival of Christianity.

There is no painting of Christ on a cross previous to 1060. Moreover in the time of the historic Christ malefactors were not crucified with arms extended and no nails were driven either

through the hands or feet—criminals were tied to an upright post or pillar without a cross-bar, and allowed to perish from hunger and exhaustion. Paintings, etc., of the historic Christ previous to 1060 always portrayed him *standing* beside a cross.

The Trinity is no “mystery,” nor the still holier Tetragrammaton, The Three in One—both are symbols borrowed from the ancient phallic religion, symbols which have long since lost their meaning, but both so-called “mysteries” are well understood by priests and students of religious history and their meaning known.

The dogma of the “descent into hell” made its first formal appearance in the Christian Church late in the 4th Century—here clearly was one more assimilation of a pagan doctrine.

The Annunciation, an obvious introduction to a supernatural birth, is found in several pagan legends; such as the Egyptian ritual usage, or myth, in regard to the birth of the Kings, as fully set forth in the sculptures on the wall of the temple at Luxor.

The Stable Birth belongs to an extremely ancient mythology.

The Water—Wine Miracle is an adaptation from the cult of Dionysos, the god of wine in Greek mythology, and is therefore very ancient.

The belief in blood sacrifice to a god to wash away sins and propitiate the deity is almost as old as man himself, and is found running through pagan cults from earliest times.

Much in the legend of Buddha having been born of a virgin, of the miracles which attended his birth, of his encounter with the Tempter, and other details of his life is very suggestive of the source from which sprang the corresponding legends of the life of Christ, not only this, but many of the observances of Latin Christianity, seem explicable by derivation from Buddhism, such as monasticism, the tonsure, the use of beads,

confession, penance and absolution, the sign of the cross, relic-worship and miracles wrought by relics, the purchase of salvation by gifts to the Church, pilgrimages to sacred places, etc., etc. Even the nimbus, which in sacred art surrounds the head of holy personages, is to be found in the sculptures of the Buddhist Topes, and the Holy Cup of the Last Supper, for which Crusaders made a vain quest, is like the Patra, or begging-dish of Buddha.

From the ancient Persian pagan religion of Mithras, Christianity borrowed the adoration of the shepherds, the use of the bell, candle, and holy water, the selection of the Vatican Mount as the sacred site, the idea of being washed in the blood of the lamb ; and many other usages came from pagan faiths, such, for instance, as the tale of the Star in the East from Adonis-worship, and the use of vestments.

The festivals that we call Christmas and Easter are pagan, and the same is to be said of the great Church feasts, such as that of the Assumption, that of St. John the Baptist, that of St. George, All Souls, etc., while the fast of Lent is also pagan. Sunday, also was a pagan holy day, and many of the old heathen gods were taken into the Church as Saints.

The Walking on the Water myth is also very ancient ; Dionysos is represented as passing over the sea to return to his followers, etc.

As regards the myth of the Twelve Apostles—there is no evidence of the existence of such a body.

The Lord's Supper was an imitation, or development, of a pre-existing ritual practice.

The Burial and Resurrection of the Saviour-God are simple developments of those mourning

rituals and fertility cults found in so many ancient systems.

The Ascension is a myth of Paganism. Even as Enoch and Elijah, both mythic figures, ascend to Heaven in the Old Testament, so does demi-god after demi-god ascend to Godhood in the heathen world.

The so-called " Lord's Prayer," placed in the Sermon on the Mount, is derived from pre-Christain Jewish lore, and, like other parts of the Sermon, can be found in an actually current Jewish document.

It could be shown that all the dogmas of the Christian faith have been derived from pre-existing cults, except such accretions as have been made since the Christian era commenced, as, for instance, the doctrine of the " Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God " which was officially adopted by the Roman Catholic Church in 1854 as a tenet of the Faith (this having the meaning that the mother of Jesus, from the moment of conception by her parents, was miraculously free from the taint of Original Sin, and thus remained all her life in a non-human state of sinlessness).

All the varied forms of religion which have appeared on earth, although claiming to be supernaturally revealed, must be regarded as the natural outcome of man's own wants and feelings.

All religions originated in " Fear." Pre-historic man had Fear of the natural elements and endeavoured to placate them ; later, Fear of what is going to happen to us and our dear ones in the so-called world to come ; eliminate Fear by Truth and the bottom falls out of all religions.

It is certain that no record exists to show that any divine or supernatural revelation has ever afforded man aid or instruction in matters relating to his physical well-being. Every advance has taken place by the gradual improvement of his faculties through the development of a more

complex brain through lower forms.

The religions of the world have been the greatest cause of bloodshed—more blood has been spilt, more murders committed, more men, women, and children killed and tortured in the name of religion than from any other cause, economic or political. Religions have always brought wars and bloodshed, never peace.

At the church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Greeks and the Latins (*i.e.*, eastern and western Christianity) were in chronic strife, and it was one of their squabbles that brought about the Crimean War.

As regards the Boer War of 1899–1902, it must be remembered that “the title of ‘Bible-loving’ had for a generation been applied to England by its pietists. The same title is confessedly applicable to the Boers of South Africa. Yet no consciousness of a common creed ever availed to restrain the hatred of the Christian mass in England towards their ‘enemy.’ ”

Consider again the recent Great War. Granted the main causes were economical and political, combined with German aggression, but even so religion was unable to stem the tide.

The Christian religion has been the cause of more bloodshed than any other religion—the Roman Catholics with their Crusades, Inquisition and persecutions, and no less the Protestants with their intoleration and slaughters. Then again Roman Catholics against Roman Catholics, and Protestants against Protestants—sect against sect—denomination against denomination, and so on through the terrible and horrible history of Christianity.

Christianity has not brought Peace but a sword. I do not say Christianity has not been productive of some good—it has, and so have all religions.

And so it has ever been—religion has never

prevented a war yet, but has been the cause of many. Sects and divisions of every religion have persecuted sects and divisions of the same religion and so on *ad infinitum*. Verily religion hath not brought harmony, but discord.

Religions and cults have caused untold misery and suffering ; Judaism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Brahminism, Mohammedanism, or any of the pagan religions never, however, held such a damnable dogma as the Christian religion initiated when it taught, as certain sections of Christianity still teach, that all children and adults who do not “believe” in Jesus Christ will go to “hell and damnation” and “everlasting torture,” although, mark you, these so-called “heretics” may never even have heard of the name of Christ.

In the year 1874, when I was seventeen, I heard in the parish church of St. Sidwell's, Exeter, the Rector, the Rev. Lincoln Galton, well-known as one of the cleverest divines and most able preachers in the West of England at that time, say in a sermon he preached one evening, his subject being Foreign Missions, that “all the millions and millions of heathens would go to ‘hell and damnation’ if they had not heard of, and believed in, Jesus Christ”—those were his exact words. My father was at church with me—my mother, not being well, had not gone. On my return my mother asked me what sort of sermon we had—I did not answer—the dear old lady repeated her question—I turned towards her and said: “The most diabolical sermon I had ever heard”—I then repeated the words Mr. Galton had said, and added “If that is Christianity I am no longer a Christian.” The poor soul turned on me like a fury, called me a heretic and an infidel, and never mentioned the subject of religion to me from that moment. My father was standing at the other end of the room and had heard all that was said. He made no comment, nor did he to

me ever refer to the incident or to religion again. I always was of the opinion that my father agreed with me.

Many the time and oft have I thanked the Rev. Lincoln Galton for that sermon, and blessed the lucky chance that took me to church that evening, for his words made me *think* about religion, yes, think and think again, until I arrived at the goal of *Truth*, as I believe, and saw the one and only way by which man can find a Heaven on Earth and “Peace that passeth understanding,” viz., in a Religion of Truth.

At the very time the above incident happened, lucky chance again dogged my foot-steps, and I found in my father's library Darwin's “Origin of Species,” and “Descent of Man”—I took them down, read them, devoured them—I had found the “Truth”—“Evolution” was the One Great Cause—from that moment I became an evolutionist, and as the years have past my belief in evolution has become stronger and stronger, until I found happiness and freedom from doubt and fear, and at the age of seventy-two look with calmness on the coming hand of death knowing I shall find eternal rest in annihilation as far as my individuality is concerned “rest for all eternity and loss of individuality,” but my body transformed into millions and millions of molecules, transformed, and yet transformed again, will live on for all eternity. Matter is indestructible—it changeth—yes! but is not destroyed—as Marcus Aurelius says: “Observe always that everything is the result of change, and get used to thinking that there is nothing Nature loves so well as to change existing forms.”

All religions throughout the ages have checked progress, especially the Roman Catholic religion, which to this day says that the laity cannot understand the Bible and that they, the priests, can alone explain the meaning of it, placing the

mentality of the priest higher than that of the laity and endeavouring to prevent learning and criticism. The priests are certainly right in saying that the laity cannot understand the Bible, but nor can the priests; it is written in the most beautiful poetical language in order to hide the truth, as much of the ancient writings were too obscene for the masses even in those profligate and sensual days.

At the League of Nations there is no mention of Religion. If religion were discussed everyone knows the League would collapse—in other words, religion is not used as an argument in the cause of Peace—the arguments are all economical and political with a small amount of humanity thrown in.

The enormous vested interests of religious communities renders it a stupendous task for even Truth to overcome economic, political, and religious factors that it is up against, and that obstructs its progress all along the line, as it has impeded Truth all through historic times and still stands in the forefront of opposition to what will ultimately prevail, although generations will pass before Utopia is reached.

The number of Protestants at present is decreasing—the greater number simply leaving the Church, whilst the more emotional, *i.e.*, mostly women, and children influenced by those women go over to Roman Catholicism for obvious reasons, such as the beautiful music and singing, elaborate vestments and services, and the most comforting belief for those who can believe in such teaching, viz., the forgiveness of sins by the priest and so no fear of going to purgatory and hell fire, and being able to pay for masses to be said for their dear departed ones so as to get them out of purgatory—in short, a certainty of going to Heaven.

The day is probably not far distant when the religious part of the community will be divided

into two distinct camps or classes, viz. : first, those who enjoy complete liberty of thought and action and practise the many virtues which are associated therewith ; and, secondly, those who become devotees of the Papal Church, which denounces the exercise of reason and enquiry into all matters connected with religion, and as a consequence demands implicit obedience, offering to its votaries in return—with or without the intervening pains of purification in purgatory, according to circumstances—an ultimate admission by the gate of St. Peter to the society of the blessed for evermore—a well-organised hierarchy which has exercised a vast influence on human affairs and interests for many ages, and may probably continue to do so for some generations yet, but which *must eventually disappear*.

If the time should come when the Roman Catholics owing to their increase of numbers, attempt to exercise political control, or to renew excessive persecutions, if only by exorbitant fees for masses for the dead and forgiveness of the sins of the living, the “ No Popery ” cry would resound again throughout the land ; but in my opinion without blood-shed, for the numbers of the Roman Catholics would be small compared to the majority and would mostly consist, except the priests, of women and children.

The Religion of Truth, which is really that of Nature, must eventually become the faith of the future. It is one in which a priestly hierarchy has no place, nor are there any specified formularies of worship. For, as Huxley says : “ Religion ought to mean simply reverence and love for the ethical ideal and the desire to realise that ideal in life.”

The old Faiths, founded on so-called “ revelation,” have long been tested and are found wanting, and a Religion of Truth will ultimately replace them.

Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright ; for the end of that man is peace.

The truth, as I profoundly believe it to be, is that interference of a supernatural kind with man's doings would have marred, if it did not arrest, the course of that development which has issued in the remarkable progress he has made, especially during the last three centuries.

All that which man has learned to regard as due to Supreme " Power " and " Wisdom," although immeasurably beyond his comprehension, is also associated with the exercise of an " absolutely Beneficent " influence over all things which exist within its range.

Belief in the foregoing will, I am sure, bring its own reward by conferring emancipation from the fetters of all the creeds, and unshakable confidence in the Power, the Wisdom, and the Beneficence which pervade and rule the Universe.

The religious feelings of the cultivated and truly religious man do not suggest to him the validity of the Christian practice of prayer to a Deity for gifts of any kind, even for the purpose of obtaining moral or mental improvement, nor for the recovery of the sick or protection from personal dangers, etc.—a practice which is so common—well knowing that all events must follow the laws of Nature, which are unalterable. No doubt the act of prayer, on the part of one who believes in its power to move the Deity to bestow a precious boon, brings consolation to the feelings of the applicant. It is a spiritual sedative which affords indescribable relief and enjoyment to many.

The religious man is grateful, yet proud, to feel himself a participant in the great and endless procession of the wise and good throughout the ages ; trustful, without shadow of a doubt, respecting any kind of future there may be in store.

Attentive observations as to the course of the sun and moon by day, and of the greater stars by night, served the purpose of time-keeping. These early attempts were followed by careful observers among the *Chaldeans*, Chinese, and Hindoos. The first mentioned, probably some 3,000 years B.C., named the chief stars and grouped some of the constellations, divided the day into hours, etc. The Ptolemaic system followed, and is a record of researches first made by Hipparchus, the Greek philosopher (about 150 B.C.), by Ptolemy of Alexandria (middle of second century, A.D.), who extended his predecessor's work.

Copernicus (A.D. 1473–1543) believed the sun was always at rest, and formed the centre of the universe; that the earth was a spherical body, which with other planets, moved round it, but revolved on its own axis, thus causing day and night. He had no idea of the importance of the stars, but regarded them as lesser lights at an uncertain distance.

Tycho Brahé (A.D. 1546–1601) believed that the sun moved round the earth.

Galileo (1564–1642) was the first to employ an arrangement of lenses, for the purpose of forming an astronomical telescope, by which means he discovered the Milky Way to be formed of separate stars. He afterwards openly taught at Rome his belief in the rotation of the earth on its own axis, and its annual passage round the sun; and was in consequence summoned before the Holy Inquisition, and was tortured and imprisoned when seventy years of age for persisting in his opinion, but he was ultimately set at liberty by the succeeding Pope.

The astronomical discoveries which man's own unaided labours have achieved, demonstrate beyond all possibility of doubt that the so-called Mosaic records are quite untrustworthy.

Two important facts :—

1.—That Man has, throughout a long and very gradual course of development from his pre-historic origin, acquired all his stores of natural knowledge—in its widest sense—solely by his own unaided efforts.

2.—That the authenticity of the ancient records, existing in several parts of the world, made at different periods of man's history and regarded as supernatural or “divinely” revealed, respecting the origin of the universe, especially that of the earth, including man himself and his duties to an alleged Creator, and asserting the existence of a future endless state of rewards and punishments for every individual after death, has never been substantiated, and is, in fact, unsupported by evidence.

What are the Tendencies, Disposition, and Purpose manifested by that “Infinite and Eternal Energy” from which all things proceed?

One method alone can throw light on the subject, viz., a studious observation of the facts of Nature and of the inferences which may be legitimately drawn from them.

We will consider under three heads what we may thus attempt to discover respecting the “Source of Infinite and Eternal Energy,” regarding each as a form of its manifestations, viz. :

I.—INFINITE POWER.

II.—INFINITE KNOWLEDGE.

III.—TENDENCIES OF DISPOSITION.

I.—INFINITE POWER.—Eternal and all-pervading, therefore ever-present, wherever we may

be, at every instant of our lives. In a certain sense it is by no means invisible, for its working is everywhere around us, and within us, in every molecule of our bodies. Man is the most finished product known on earth of "Nature's" work—that is, that which has resulted from the "Infinite and Eternal Energy"; the noblest and completest manifestation of what has been called the "divine afflatus"—the "Temple of the Holy Ghost" in ancient language, used in times when men were ignorant of Nature's laws, and when faith in the Invisible must necessarily suffice for their needs, until discovery of scientific methods had revealed the existence of hitherto unknown powers within and around us; facts in place of fables; and we might adopt for ourselves the old expressed but mystic saying: "Behold the Kingdom of God is within you."

II.—INFINITE KNOWLEDGE AND INTELLIGENCE.—We can but bow in humility, and confess in the words of the Hebrew poet: "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain to it."

III.—TENDENCIES, DISPOSITION, OR PURPOSE of the unknown "Source of Infinite and Eternal Energy" from which all things proceed. It is an unquestionable fact of the history of Man's career and progress in this world that it has been accomplished solely by "his own unaided efforts."

He has fought his own way throughout, has overcome every obstacle himself, and passed through an educational course of the most perfect kind—self-taught, not helped. An admirable example of the evolution of the race resulting in the "Survival of the Fittest"; which by no means denotes the physically strongest alone, but the mentally and morally fittest as well, ethical completeness being the natural aim and end of the course.

By the long process of Man's evolution ethical rules have been evolved. The "golden rule": "To do unto others as you would they should do unto you," has been enunciated in almost identical terms by the sages of other civilisations, long before the time of the historical Christ. A code of morals has resulted by degrees as man himself has progressed, and is not the product of any supernatural revelation. For due consideration will render clear the fact that every breach of Nature's laws, whether physical or moral, certainly brings with it punishment in this life, sooner or later. So with every breach of moral law; any unjust act committed equally involves its penalty in this life. The individual becomes habituated to dishonourable designs and acts, and sinks lower in the scale of morality, until he loses self-respect, also that of others, and at last is trusted by none. In every department of life unblemished character is the highest attainment.

These sentiments are beautifully expressed by an ancient Hebrew poet, whose religious creed, let it be remembered, ignored any scheme of rewards and punishments in a future life. Psalm xxxvii., 35-37: "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

Think if the impossible could happen—if at one fell swoop, the possessions of all the religious bodies in the world could be confiscated, and their proceeds applied to the education and betterment of mankind—the progress in one generation towards Peace and Truth would be incalculable, but such cannot be, nor would be advisable if it were possible, because the catastrophic upheaval would be disastrous to the end in view—yet a change such as the above will happen, but gradually and slowly. As generations pass, the

Truth will gain ground, until Peace and Good-will reigneth in the place of ignorance and fear.

In the Gospel of St. Luke we find the words :
“ On earth peace, good-will towards men ”—we shall never find such a happy consummation until the words in the Gospel of St. John (chap. x., 16) come true : “ There shall be one fold and one shepherd ”—Yes !

One Fold—Humanity.

One Shepherd—Truth.

I will conclude with the words of Marcus Aurelius, the greatest, from a philosophical point of view, of all the Pagan Emperors, and who lived A.D. 121–180 :—

“ I search after truth by which man never yet was harmed. But he is harmed who abideth on still in his deception and ignorance.”

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